



The Role of Islamic Religious Education in Overcoming Students' Moral Degradation (A Case Study at SDN 122 Cijawura Bandung)

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Abstract

Moral degradation among elementary school students is a growing concern in the digital and globalized era. Behaviors such as declining respect for teachers, poor discipline, and reduced social empathy reflect a weakening internalization of moral values. This study aims to describe the forms of moral degradation observed among students at SDN 122 Cijawura Bandung and to analyze the strategic role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in addressing these issues. The research uses a qualitative case study approach, with data collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings reveal that PAI plays a vital role in character development through an integrative approach encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. PAI teachers act as role models, facilitators, and spiritual mentors by employing contextual teaching methods, organizing religious activities such as Qur'an recitation and congregational prayers, and reinforcing moral values through daily interactions. Despite challenges such as limited instructional time and the pervasive influence of unsupervised digital media, the strategies implemented by teachers show a gradual positive impact on students' behavior. The study recommends fostering synergy between schools, teachers, and parents to build an educational ecosystem that supports the development of noble character from an early age.

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Introduction (مقدمة)

The development of the times and the advancement of information technology have had a major impact on the lives of young generations, including elementary school students. On one hand, technological progress has expanded access to knowledge and global information, allowing students to gain new insights more easily and quickly. On the other hand, the overwhelming flow of unfiltered information has also brought about serious challenges, particularly in the form of moral crises among children. Phenomena such as the decline in respect for parents and teachers, the increase in bullying cases, and the tendency toward permissive behavior from an early age have become increasingly evident in the daily lives of elementary school students (Triana et al., 2023). This condition reflects symptoms of moral degradation — a decline in ethical values, manners, and virtues that should serve as the foundation of social behavior and character formation from early childhood.

The elementary school age is a crucial phase in the formation of personality and morality. This period is known as the *golden age* in developmental psychology, in which the instillation of values has a stronger and more enduring impact. As explained by Piaget (1932), children at this age begin to develop moral concepts independently through social interaction, not merely through parental authority. This means that schools become a strategic environment to foster students' moral awareness through structured learning and positive interactions. Therefore, if moral values are not instilled properly from an early age, it will be difficult to rebuild them at later stages of education. In this context, schools play an important role not only in academic achievement but also as environments for holistic character formation.

One of the main instruments of character education in elementary schools is Islamic Religious Education (PAI). This subject not only conveys normative religious knowledge but also serves as an essential medium for shaping students' social, spiritual, and emotional behavior. Values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, respect toward teachers, and care for others are central to this learning process (Anisa Nurhasanah, Haldini Reygita, and Salsa Nabila Marcella Kalalo, 2024).

In the Minister of National Education Regulation (Permendiknas) No. 22 of 2006, it is also emphasized that the goal of Islamic Religious Education is to develop students who are faithful, pious, and possess noble character. This means that PAI functions as the moral foundation of education, which should ideally be reflected not only in the classroom but also throughout all aspects of students' daily activities.

Nevertheless, the implementation of Islamic Religious Education in elementary schools still faces various complex challenges. Some of these include the lack of varied teaching methods, limited integration of moral values into the overall school environment, and insufficient reinforcement of character education outside the PAI class hours.

The success of character building largely depends on the approach used by teachers, including their ability to act as role models, facilitators, and motivators. In this regard, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher holds a central role as the heart of moral education implementation at school. Support from the school environment and synergy among all parties involved also play an essential role in creating a conducive educational climate for students' moral development (Yani, 2024).

SDN 122 Cijawura Bandung is one of the public elementary schools that also faces moral degradation among its students. Signs of this degradation can be seen in negative behaviors, declining responsibility toward school tasks, weak discipline in following rules, and low social concern among students. On the other hand, the school also demonstrates a commitment to instilling Islamic values through PAI learning and religious activities. This provides an important

basis for examining more deeply how Islamic Religious Education is implemented as a strategy for moral development amid these challenges.

Based on the above background, the research problems in this study are focused on four main aspects: (1) the forms of moral degradation among students at SDN 122 Cijawura Bandung, (2) the role of Islamic Religious Education in addressing moral degradation, (3) the strategies used by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in instilling moral values in students, and (4) the challenges and efforts to strengthen students' moral values at SDN 122 Cijawura Bandung.

In line with these research questions, the objectives of this study are to describe the forms of moral degradation among students at SDN 122 Cijawura Bandung, to analyze the role of Islamic Religious Education in overcoming it, to identify the strategies implemented by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in character building, and to examine the challenges faced in moral value cultivation as well as the efforts made to strengthen students' character in the school environment. This research is expected to contribute to the reinforcement of Islamic religious education practices that are more contextual and applicable in shaping the character of the young generation from early education.



Method (منهج)

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in addressing moral degradation among students at SDN 122 Cijawura Bandung. The Islamic Religious Education teacher serves as the primary subject, as they hold direct responsibility for character development through the learning process. Meanwhile, students are observed as the objects of study to determine the extent to which PAI implementation influences their attitudes and behaviors within the school environment.

Data collection was conducted from May to June 2025 using three main techniques: in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were carried out with the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher to understand the strategies and approaches applied, while observations were conducted on students during learning activities and social interactions. Documents such as lesson plans (RPP) and records of religious activities were also analyzed to support field data.

All data were analyzed descriptively using a qualitative approach through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. To ensure validity, the researcher employed triangulation of sources, techniques, and time so that the results obtained would be accurate and accountable. Thus, this method was chosen to ensure that the research findings align with the study objectives and provide a comprehensive contextual understanding of the role of Islamic Religious Education in students' moral development.



Result (نتائج)

Based on in-depth interviews, direct classroom observations, and documentation of learning activities at SDN 122 Cijawura Bandung, a clear picture emerged regarding students' moral conditions and the strategic role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in addressing them. The students at this school come from diverse social backgrounds. Although most show high enthusiasm for learning, several behaviors indicate moral degradation, such as declining respect for teachers, indifference toward school rules, and the habit of speaking harshly to peers. These findings align with the study of Tia Ayuni et al. (2024), which found that Islamic Religious Education effectively fosters tolerance and mutual respect at the elementary level. Similarly, Wahid et al. (2024) demonstrated that Islamic Religious Education teachers play a crucial role in shaping discipline through religious activities. This situation naturally draws attention from the school, particularly from Islamic Religious Education teachers who stand at the forefront of instilling moral and Islamic character values.

The implementation of Islamic Religious Education at the elementary level is not only focused on the cognitive transfer of religious knowledge but also serves as a means of internalizing moral and ethical values. At SDN 122 Cijawura Bandung, PAI is implemented integratively through classroom learning, religious activities, and daily value-based routines within the school environment. Raito & Sukmawati (2023) also assert that the success of value internalization is evident in practices such as praying before lessons and performing congregational prayers, which gradually shape students' moral awareness.

Islamic Religious Education teachers serve as the main executors of the curriculum and strategies of PAI. In practice, they convey Islamic values using methods that are relevant and touch the students' affective dimension. Teachers at this school, especially PAI teachers, realize that character formation cannot rely solely on one subject or one party. Synergy is needed between formal classroom learning, habitual activities at school, and the active role of families in guiding children.

Through contextual and humanistic approaches, PAI learning is designed not only to deliver religious material but also to foster students' moral awareness through dialogue, role modeling, and reflective activities. Thus, Islamic Religious Education is not merely understood as a subject but as a fundamental pillar of character formation in elementary schools. This is consistent with the research of Mutia Nur Putri et al. (2023), which shows that the character education perspective of PAI teachers significantly determines the development of students' noble character. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education teachers must always strive to design learning that emphasizes not only the theoretical delivery of religious content but also the internalization of values through practice and exemplary behavior.

To provide a more structured and comprehensive picture of the research findings, the following section presents a discussion based on the main aspects observed and analyzed during the research process.

Forms of Moral Degradation Among Students at SDN 122 Cijawura Bandung

This study aims to examine in depth the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in addressing moral degradation among elementary school students, with SDN 122 Cijawura Bandung as the research site. The results obtained from observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation show that moral degradation is indeed a real problem faced by elementary students, even from early grades.

During observation, several behaviors were found that indicate a decline in students' understanding and practice of basic moral values. Some students showed disrespectful attitudes toward teachers—such as not greeting them, speaking without permission, and not listening during lessons. These findings are consistent with Panjaitan et al. (2025), who revealed that moral degradation among elementary students is often marked by decreased social awareness, lack of respect for teachers, and weak sense of responsibility within the school environment.

Furthermore, according to Lulus Sukriana (2025), a PAI teacher interviewed as a key informant, one dominant factor causing students' declining manners is the influence of digital media. She stated:

“Many children today imitate the language of YouTube more fluently than listening to what teachers say at school.”

This statement illustrates how unsupervised digital media contributes to permissive, aggressive, and unethical behaviors among children. Research by Mutia Nur Putri et al. (2023) supports this view, showing that exposure to online media without supervision can shift the moral and religious values taught at school.

The causes of students' moral degradation are complex. One is the lack of parental control over their children's media consumption at home. Many students have unrestricted access to

social media without supervision. This finding is consistent with Tantri et al. (2023), who noted that unsupervised exposure to digital media can distort the moral values taught in school, as students are more influenced by languages, lifestyles, and habits that contradict religious and social norms.

Theoretically, this phenomenon can be explained through Albert Bandura's (2002) concept of *moral disengagement*, a psychological process in which individuals justify negative behavior as normal due to environmental influence. In the context of elementary students, normalizing rude words and disrespectful behavior represents adaptation to a permissive digital environment. In addition, according to Thomas Lickona (1991), moral degradation occurs when three aspects – moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action – are disconnected.

PAI teachers at SDN 122 also reported that many students do not fully understand that respecting teachers and being polite are fundamental Islamic teachings. Although these values are included in the curriculum, their implementation is often inconsistent due to the lack of reinforcement from the home environment. Mahyuddin et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of continuity between school education, family support, and media control to build strong and sustainable character.

Thus, the moral degradation observed among students is not solely due to weak religious education at school but rather the lack of continuity between classroom learning and students' daily environments (Sofyana & Haryanto, 2023).

The Role of Islamic Religious Education in Addressing Students' Moral Degradation

Based on interviews and observations at SDN 122 Cijawura Bandung, Islamic Religious Education teachers play a central role in addressing students' moral degradation. Their role extends beyond teaching cognitive religious knowledge to include character development, habituation of Islamic behavior, and strengthening moral values in daily school activities.

PAI teachers actively integrate moral values into the learning process and daily interactions with students. For example, when teaching about manners toward parents and teachers, they not only explain the material but also provide direct examples, relate it to students' experiences, and lead reflection sessions. Activities such as reciting the Qur'an before lessons, greeting teachers, and reinforcing polite speech, dress, and friendship etiquette form part of consistent moral education practices.

PAI teacher Ai Nurlatifah emphasized the importance of instilling *adab* (manners) before knowledge. In an interview, she said that moral values are continuously taught both inside and outside the classroom, often through dialogic approaches. "I always tell my students that manners come before knowledge. It's useless to be smart if you can't respect your parents or teachers," she said.

This reflective and humanistic strategy allows students not only to understand values theoretically but also to internalize them through contemplation. As a response to moral degradation, PAI teachers apply practical learning approaches that engage students affectively. Lecturing is not dominant but combined with Q&A, value-based games, and storytelling about moral figures such as the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, his companions, and other Islamic role models (Rahmawati & Syamsudin, 2023). Such narrative-based delivery tends to leave a deeper impression on students.

Outside the classroom, character building is reinforced through routine religious activities – greeting teachers, shaking hands, group prayers, and reciting the Qur'an before classes. Documentation shows that activities such as *tadarus*, congregational *Dhuha* prayers, and Friday sermons have become an integral part of shaping an Islamic school culture.

Teachers see these activities not merely as religious routines but as ways to cultivate emotional calmness in students. "These activities aren't just worship – they help calm their hearts before learning. A calm child is easier to guide," one teacher noted.

This approach aligns with the concept of value internalization in moral education, where

students not only cognitively recognize values but also emotionally and behaviorally embody them. Mutia Nur Putri et al. (2023) describe PAI teachers as effective moral agents when they become role models and use contextual methods. Andika & Nuha (2024) also stress that PAI teachers should act as spiritual mentors rather than mere academic instructors.

According to Asy'ari (2020), effective value education must encompass three aspects – cognitive (knowledge), affective (appreciation), and psychomotor (practice). The PAI teachers at SDN 122 apply these integratively through teaching, habituation, and role modeling.

Character development success depends largely on teachers' consistency in guiding and modeling moral behavior. Collaboration between teachers and parents is essential, as moral education will not be effective if values taught at school are not reinforced at home. When students show stagnant behavior, teachers initiate dialogue with parents to find joint solutions.

This demonstrates that PAI teachers work collaboratively with families as part of a holistic educational ecosystem. Such collaboration is key to addressing moral degradation comprehensively. Thus, Islamic Religious Education in elementary schools serves as an integrated moral education instrument. Teachers not only convey values but also bring them to life in students' daily routines.

Strategies for Moral Development at SDN 122 Cijawura Bandung

Although not all students exhibit deviant behavior, this tendency serves as a warning for schools to strengthen PAI's function as the foundation of character education. In facing increasingly complex moral challenges in the digital era, PAI teachers at SDN 122 Cijawura Bandung have designed holistic and practical moral development strategies that target students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

PAI teachers realize that moral formation cannot rely solely on classroom instruction. Therefore, they combine modeling, value habituation, reflective dialogue, and student participation in value-based activities. This strategy has proven effective in fostering moral awareness that grows not only from obedience but from understanding and habitual practice.

The main strategy used is *uswah hasanah* (good example). Teachers consistently model positive behavior, including how to speak politely and guide gently. One teacher stated that to encourage polite speech among students, teachers themselves must model it in every interaction.

In line with character education principles, PAI teachers integrate moral development through sustainable and experience-based strategies. For example, when discussing honesty or speaking etiquette, teachers not only explain but also demonstrate and encourage reflection and practice. This aligns with Lickona's (1992) theory that character building requires harmony among moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action.

Daily routines such as Qur'an recitation, greetings, respectful communication, and cooperation in classroom cleanliness reinforce Islamic-based moral habits and build a spiritually and socially conducive atmosphere. Teachers act as not only instructors but also as moral guides and cultural shapers.

Reflective strategies are also applied – when moral violations occur, teachers prefer dialogue over punishment. "I'd rather talk to the child about why they did it than scold them. Usually, they become more aware that way," one teacher said (Ristonga Bascanti, 2024). This empathetic approach emphasizes internal awareness rather than external compliance.

Teachers also participate in structured religious programs like *Dhuha* prayers, weekly sermons, and spiritual mentoring. These not only nurture religiosity but also build responsibility, discipline, and empathy. Documentation shows that students active in such programs display stronger moral development.

Collaboration with parents is also crucial. When facing serious moral issues, teachers invite parents for discussion. "If I see a child not improving, I talk with their parents. We find a way together," one teacher explained. This highlights that character education cannot succeed without family involvement.

Hence, moral development strategies at SDN 122 Cijawura Bandung are holistic – combining instruction, habituation, reflection, modeling, and collaboration. PAI acts not just as a subject but as an instrument of contextual character formation.

Challenges and Efforts to Strengthen Moral Values at SDN 122 Cijawura Bandung

Although moral education through PAI has shown positive results, several challenges persist. One major issue is limited instructional time – only two class hours per week – which restricts opportunities for deep moral engagement. Meanwhile, moral formation requires continuous reinforcement across contexts.

External influences such as social media, digital content, and home upbringing often contradict school-taught values. As one teacher noted:

“At school, we teach students to speak politely, but at home, some parents yell all the time. The values don’t align.”

This aligns with Wahyu Nugroho (2022), who asserts that value consistency between school and home is key to character education success.

Another challenge is the limited parental involvement in moral education. Some parents still view moral education as solely the school’s responsibility rather than a shared one (Setyoningsih, Ratnasari, & Hilyana, 2023). This hampers the creation of consistent value environments between school and home.

Nonetheless, the efforts of PAI teachers have yielded positive change. Documentation and teacher reflections show that students actively engaged in religious activities exhibit more empathy, discipline, and initiative, such as leading Qur’an recitations or helping younger peers pray.

These findings confirm that Islamic Religious Education contributes significantly to addressing moral degradation when implemented through comprehensive approaches – teaching, habituation, role modeling, and moral dialogue. Success is reinforced by teachers’ affective and social engagement with students (Siti Kholinda P., 2025).

To strengthen these outcomes, further actions are needed. Schools can expand value-based religious activities such as *adab* classes, spiritual mentoring, or peer-guidance programs. PAI teachers should also receive continuous training in character pedagogy, communication, and psychology. Finally, stronger communication between teachers and parents is essential to ensure consistent moral reinforcement across settings.

Thus, the challenges in moral education should not be seen as obstacles but as opportunities to design more innovative, collaborative, and contextual strategies. Islamic Religious Education has great potential as a foundational tool for character formation from an early age – especially when supported by dedicated teachers, a conducive school culture, and actively engaged parents.



Conclusion (خاتمة)

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a significant contribution in addressing the moral degradation of elementary school students, particularly at SDN 122 Cijawura Bandung. PAI serves not only as a subject that delivers religious teachings but also as a strategic medium for instilling moral values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, discipline, and manners in students’ daily lives. Through a comprehensive approach that involves classroom learning, religious activities, value habituation, and character building, PAI has proven to be an essential instrument in shaping students’ holistic personalities from an early age.

In practice, the implementation of Islamic Religious Education in elementary schools is not without challenges, such as limited instructional time, the negative influence of digital media,

and the lack of parental involvement in character development. Nevertheless, PAI continues to demonstrate its effectiveness when religious values are internalized not only theoretically but also through consistent practical applications within the school environment. The success of this internalization process is strongly influenced by a supportive learning environment and the use of contextual teaching approaches.

Therefore, efforts to strengthen the implementation of Islamic Religious Education in elementary schools are essential. Schools need to expand the function of PAI as part of the overall school culture rather than treating it merely as a subject by integrating moral values into all learning activities and aspects of school life. Enhancing the capacity of Islamic Religious Education teachers through continuous professional development is also crucial so that they can deliver learning that is relevant to contemporary challenges. Furthermore, parental involvement must be increased to ensure that the moral education taught at school is reinforced at home. The synergy between schools, teachers, PAI as a subject, and families serves as a vital foundation for building a young generation that is not only intellectually capable but also morally upright.



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